**Promotion of Indian Art and Culture**

†294. SHRIMATI KUM KUM RAI: Will the Minister of TOURISM AND CULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the importance of Indian Art and Culture is on the decline;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor; and

(c) the steps being taken by Government for promotion of the same?

THE MINISTER OF TOURISM AND CULTURE (SHRIMATI AMBIKA SONI): (a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

(c) Protecting and promoting Indian art and culture is a major task of the Department of Culture. For this purpose, a number of institutions have been set up and schemes formulated. The Akademies take up the promotion of cultural diversity in the areas of literature, performing arts and visual arts. Institutions of Buddhist and Tibetan Studies under the Department as well as special Libraries like Rampur Raza Library and Khuda Baksh Oriental Public Library preserve the knowledge and literature of a wide spectrum of our heritage. The seven Zonal Cultural Centres work for the promotion of diverse folk cultures. Besides, many schemes operated by the Department to encourage cultural diversity by supporting creativity and individual efforts for continuing India's rich heritage and traditions.

**Promotion of Andaman Islands as a tourist hub**

295. SHRI KARNENDU BHATTACHARJEE:
SHRI MANOJ BHATTACHARYA:

Will the Minister of TOURISM AND CULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether a German tour operator has selected the Andaman Islands as the world's beach;

(b) if so, the details thereof and the reasons therefor; and

(c) whether Government have any plan to encourage and attract tourists groups to make the Islands the tourist hub by offering appropriate concessions and incentives and if so, the details thereof ?

† Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

THE MINISTER OF TOURISM AND CULTURE (SHRIMATI AMBIKA SONI): (a) and (b) According to a media report, a German Tour Operator, Mr. De Ruiter had selected the world's best ten beaches. Top ranking was given to Andaman Islands followed by Laccadive, the Maldives and Seychelles. His assessment has been based on verifiable factors such as sand quality, depth of water, etc. TIME Magazine had earlier declared beach No. 7, Havelock Island in Andaman as the "Best Beach in Asia".

(c) The Ministry of Tourism has been promoting tourism to the Andaman through publicity support and central assistance for infrastructure development.

**Proposal for linking of small rivers and canals**

296. SHRI RAJEEV SHUKLA: Will the Minister of WATER RESOURCES be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are planning to create smaller links between rivers and canals to resolve irregularities of water distribution; and

(b) if so, the details of the proposals alongwith its status so far?

THE MINISTER OF WATER RESOURCES (PROF. SAIF-UD-DIN SOZ): (a) and (b) The Ministry of Water Resources (MoWR) and Central Water Commission (CWC) formulated a National Perspective Plan (NPP) for Water Resources Development in 1980 envisaging inter-basin transfer of water from surplus basins to deficit ones. NPP comprises of two components, *viz.* (i) Himalayan rivers development component and (ii) Peninsular rivers development component. National Water Development Agency (NWDA) was set up in 1982 as a registered Society under MoWR to carry out detailed studies for NPP. NWDA, based on water balance and other studies, identified 30 links (14 under Himalayan and 16 under Peninsular) for preparation of feasibility reports (FR). FRs of 16 (2 Himalayan and 14 Peninsular) links have been completed by NWDA. Irrigation is a State subject and as per present policy, irrigation projects are planned, investigated, formulated, implemented and funded by the State Governments out of their own resources and as per their own priorities. Therefore, the works to resolve irregularities of water distribution are carried out by State Governments and the Central Government does not contemplate smaller links between rivers and canals.